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Unlucky 13

I would like to start with something simple. That, which we all accept or take for granted, it is the 'normal'. That is what we accept, but never question. Why!! Have you ever taken the time to analyse it? Have you never taken the time or made the time to question what is normal? Can you make the time? No one can make time when mentally ill. Time does not matter anymore/ We are drugged up, shut up with our powers, taken away.

I've had voices for many years, only diagnosed in '96 when I had a massive breakdown. Time stood still for me! Not society. Not my friends or family. Just me.

I was misunderstood, different, outside the norm. I was different but to whom? Not me! No one was willing to listen to me. No one would listen as I was mad. But why was I mad? Unable to tell, I was full of fear for my own life, I was going to be killed for what I now knew. Ecstasy to terror compressed. All my life I have believed I am the unluckiest person to have ever walked this planet. The more effort it took to keep going, the harder my life seemed to be. Even my partner says I'm the unluckiest person she's ever met. She's ought to know! My voices know for my voices constantly remind me of my bad luck. They know how unlucky I am. After 36 years I was so very depressed and so misunderstood that I stopped challenging the voices. I gave in, I couldn't take anymore. I had no one to turn to.

Everything bottled up, drugged up. At last! Medication. A relief, all I wanted was the drugs. Prescribed only! Now people can see there's a real problem. I take anti-depressants. Little white pills. Everyone is happy! Everyone but me. This is the solution for them but what the hell is the answer for me? I am now a cabbage still hearing voices. No one to turn to. No help. No one takes the time to question. No one makes the time to ask me! They only want to know about the meds. They only want to know if I'm taking enough meds. Scared to disclose my secrets in life must end. Yet some of my voices are supporting and I turn to that support for help and pray to the Lord my God. Voices telling me to end it all as I cannot make sense anymore. I need answers. A voice keeps telling me I'm unlucky and in desperation I ask why. Why? The answer I receive is a number. Thirteen. Why thirteen, thirteen is unlucky. My 'good' voices say why is it unlucky? I ask you: Why is the number thirteen unlucky? As time stood still seven years passed. Seven years before I reached my answer to my simple problem. Is it simple? When I reached the conclusion, I was left with a dilemma: opposites. Unlucky Lucky, Lucky seven. It took a week to answer that one, See a pattern. Unlucky number thirteen, seven years, one week. Lucky one week was not the answer. The voices were still ringing out, still hurting. So, I looked again and found what I believe to be the right answer. How do I know this? No

longer unlucky, I had had become lucky and most of my voices left me. I ended up in the mental health system because no one had time to listen to me. To what was going off in my head I got so completely out of control I believed I knew they were fiddling the National Lottery. I kept the secret to myself for nine years. Have you carried a secret for years too frightened to tell anyone? Terrified that if you tell you will wake up dead. Insomnia. I slept with one eye open. I turned to my good voices, my angels. I asked them to hold my eyes open so I could sleep but appear awake. Just four little minutes. I told my mother, and she went off alarming, telling me not to be so stupid. What happened to me? I was a persecuted Christian and I'm simply Christian again. Not a 'schizophrenic' not a 'psycho' I believe I'm a good person. I listen to others and respect them. I give them time to talk. Precious, valuable time. Now I'm a charitable person. I help others and I am myself helped in turn. The people who facilitate the Paranoia Network have helped me rediscover myself. We share views and debate. We have fun. I now co-facilitate the group. I deliver training. I've rediscovered my learning skills and capabilities. God created man on the seventh day. Christ is number thirteen – the last supper. He was never number one. That was not what he stood for.

Thank you...

The use of a Variety of Meditation Techniques to Manage and Reduce the Prevalence of Malevolent Voices

Stress can be a major factor in the triggering of voices. However, if this is the case, it is also likely to follow that, if voice hearers are taught effective means of stress reduction, the severity of their symptoms will be reduced accordingly. The ultimate goal of Yoga and Buddhism is enlightenment. However essential to the process of achieving this goal is the attainment of states of peace and serenity and therefore the reduction of stress and distress. In these traditions it is largely by the practise of meditation that such states are realized.

While many forms of meditation in Yoga and Buddhism need considerable ability to perform, there are others at a less advanced level that are relatively simple to use. Moreover, these can often be practised with no knowledge of or belief in the philosophical foundations of these traditions it was to this latter type of technique that I introduced the voice hearers who feature in the following case studies. Although techniques from Yoga and Buddhism are discussed here; meditation techniques from Sufism, Christianity, secular, and other traditions are likely to have the same kind of result.

Case Studies – X

X was in his mid-twenties. He had been diagnosed by his consultant as suffering from paranoid schizophrenia, possibly exacerbated by cannabis use. He was taking nearly the maximum recommended dose of the neuroleptic medication clozapine. However, despite this, he heard voices much of the time, at a fairly constant level X's voices. Although X was initially reluctant to talk about what he was experiencing over time it was possible to build up a friendly relationship with him so that he was prepared to talk more openly. X said that his problem began when he started, in his words, to 'hassle' a young woman he was fond of and with whom he wanted a relationship. He had known this young woman since he was a child, however he had become upset when a friend of his started going out with her. He tried to encourage her to go out with him instead, but she was not interested. It was at this point that he began to hear the principal voices that caused him so many problems. One of the voices was the young woman's and the other was her father's. X understandably became extremely distressed. This distress seems to have been expressed by his smashing things in his room and shouting at his parents. In his words, he 'went mad'. X thought that the voices might be coming through the radio, he also thought that the young woman and her father were persecuting him by monitoring all his movements and projecting thoughts into his mind. One of the main themes of the voices was

that he should leave home. The father's voice would sometimes tell X to pay back some money. In addition, X sometimes heard voices other than those of the young woman and her father. For example, from time to time he heard a group of voices, all male, one of the things they said was 'X, we're heartless.' X was not quite sure what this meant. On occasions there was some talk between the voices X heard. At other times, they might give a running commentary on what he was doing. For example, if X had forgotten to buy some milk, they might say 'You've forgotten to buy the milk' Sometimes they could be quite playful.

The Use of Calming Phrases

My main role was to work with X generally, helping him reintegrate into the wider community after his stay in hospital. Therefore, initially, I did not have any particular plan to help him ameliorate the effects of his voices. However, in the course of working with him, I suggested he mentally repeat calming words or simple phrases such as 'peace, peace' or 'calm, calm' when he heard them. I had found on previous occasions that his approach appeared to assist other voice hearers. The repetition of calming words or phrases featured in both Yoga and Buddhism in the practise of mantra, the yoga of sound. Interestingly, with very little help from me. X reported that this method helped him significantly in reducing the power and frequency of his voices.

Making Sense of the Voices

Encouraged by this, and as a supplement to this approach, X and I started to spend time trying to analyse the nature and causes of the voices. In Particular we used some of the insights outlined in Romme and Escher's Making Sense of Voices. According to Romme, and Escher, it is often traumatic life events such as those experienced by X that trigger voice hearing. Perhaps partly as a result of our discussions in time X came to the conclusion that the voices, he heard could be a creation of his own mind. This was a much less distressing interpretation than believing that he was being continuously watched and monitored by the young woman and her father and that they were transmitting their thoughts into his brain.

The use of the Breath

In addition to the repetition of calming phrases, I taught X simple breathing techniques. Originally, I showed him how to perform the yogic humming breath

which had seemed to work well with other voice hearers. This involves taking a deep breath and then exhaling slowly while making a long continuous humming sound, during the exhalation one can also gently press the tragus of each ear (the tragus is the projection of cartilage in front of the opening of the ear canal) to close the ear openings so as to increase the

loudness of the sound heard in the head. Each of the different elements of this breathing technique has the effect of calming the body and mind in a safe and controlled manner. The fact that the outbreath is longer than the inbreath tends to slow down the heart rate. Slower breathing is also a natural means of lowering blood pressure. The humming sound gives a gentle relaxing vibro-massage to the brain. An additional effect is that the mind is drawn automatically to the sound which enhances concentration. X however preferred to use only part of this technique, the deep breathing with an extended-out breath but without the humming sound, he reported that when he used this method, the number of utterances from the voices would immediately drop substantially not very long after this they might disappear completely. Ten to fifteen minutes after he had finished performing the technique the voices would tend to return to their previous level. On the whole, however, X favoured the repetition of calming phrases over the use of breathing techniques.

Outcomes

Interestingly these temporarily periods of diminution of voice hearing became more permanent. Over a period of about six months, the impact and frequency of occurrence of X's voices diminished substantially the first major change was the disappearance of the main persecutory voice – that of the young woman. Her

father's voice however, remained in an alienated form. After this, X's experiences continued to diminish. Eventually he reported that for the vast majority of the time, all the voices had merely become voices at the back of his mind of which he no longer took any notice. He said that, if anyone had asked what they were saying, he would have found it difficult to tell them it was only in very stressful situations on very rare occasions that any surfaced at all. One result of this major improvement in his voices was that X's psychiatrist decided to reduce his medication.

Conclusion

X had suffered severely from hearing voices for a number of years. When X started using the breath technique the number of utterances from the voices would immediately diminish substantially. They would then increase again sometime after he had finished performing the technique. These sudden fluctuations in X's voices occurring when this meditation technique was performed would appear to rule out the possibility that what was taking place was somehow a delayed effect of the anti-psychotic medication. X was taking instead it would seem very likely that there was a causal link between the temporarily amelioration of X's voices and his use of the breath. The same can be said about the effects of using the calming phrases.

It is more difficult to explain why the temporarily periods of diminution of voice hearing became more permanent. One reason could be that the ability to control the voices for a short period of time set up a 'virtuous circle' by reducing the fear of them. However other causes cannot be ruled out.

A Supporting Case Study

As already mentioned, I have taught similar methods to other voice hearers, although this was done much less intensively several of them have reported positive effects. Even so, it could be argued that all these results might have been caused by suggestion or that reports of the results might have been influenced by a desire to please etc. What was needed was a control of some kind. By chance, this occurred in the context of a yoga group that I facilitated for a while at a mental health day centre.

The service users who came to the group suffered from a number of forms of severe mental distress including severer distress caused by voices. We practised a range of techniques in the sessions. Besides physical postures, we performed breathing and sound techniques. The latter included bhr mari as well as the use of vowel sounds such as ah, ee and oo. These were made by

first taking a deep breath and then making the sounds on a long slow outbreath, this technique has similar effects to bhr Mari. The extended outbreath has a generally calming effect while the mind is naturally drawn to focusing on the sounds, which calms the body and mind still further.

Besides these methods, we used guided imagery, for this approach I had developed a series of scenarios. These included imagining that one was floating in a garden of flowers and herbs floating on the water in a deep blue lake, floating in the sky etc. Visualisation is an important element of yoga.

I AM

I am: Yet what I am no one cares or knows. My friends forsake me like a memory lost.

I am the self-consumer of my woes. They rise and vanish in oblivious host. Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost; and yet I am! and live with shadows lost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise

Into the living sea of waking dreams. Where there is neither sense of life nor joys.

But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems; and the dearest that I loved the best-are strange-nay, rather stranger than the rest

I long for scenes where man has never trod; a place where women never smiled or wept

There to abide with my creator. God, and sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept

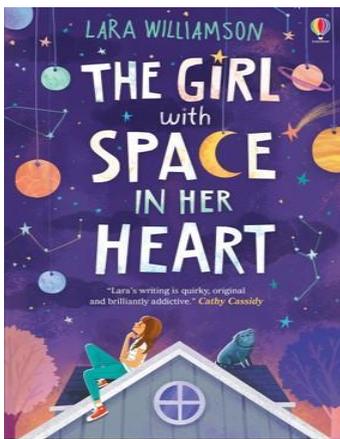
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie.

The grass below-above the vaulted sky

OUR PLANET

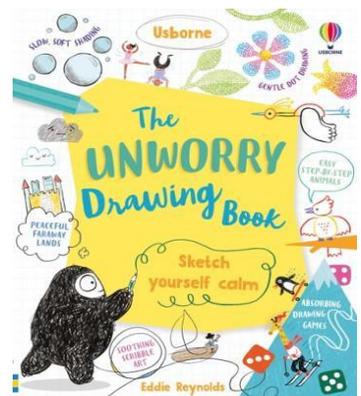
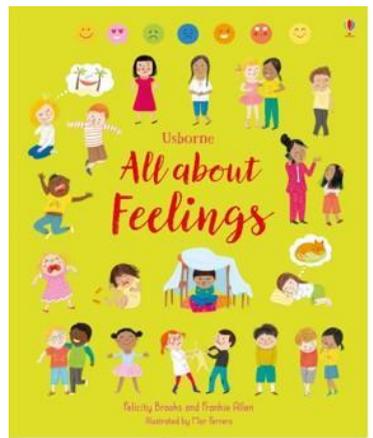
Our planet revolves around the sun
Turns its axis as the days are done
Kids have fun playing in the snow
In winter as the chilled winds blow

In summer, folks stroll on the streets
In parks they swarm as the sun beats
The armada of ships rumble into ports
In days long gone by, the settlers build forts.



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Maastricht Interview for Hearing Voices & Problematic Thought Beliefs & Paranoia Is available online and face to face from the National Paranoia Network. Other training available Working through Paranoia, Making Sense of Hearing Voices & Working with Childhood Trauma It can be delivered across the world for more information and costings

Email enquiries@nationalparanoianetwork.org

Online Hearing Voices & Paranoia Support Groups Join our online Hearing Voices & Paranoia Support Group Meetings on ZOOM

Thursday 3pm -4.30pm with Paul Meeting ID 88460268952 Password 375878

Sundays: HVN USA on ZOOM 6:30p - 8:00p USA Time with Cindee 11.30pm – 1.00 am UK Time Meeting ID 827 5463 8654 No Password Needed

Saturdays Texas USA HVN Meeting on ZOOM 10am-11.30 USA Time with Paul 4pm-5.30pm UK Time Meeting ID 83079149464 No Password Needed

Monday Sheffield Hearing Voices & Paranoia Support Group with Emma & Lyn on ZOOM 11am-12pm UK Time Meeting ID: 558 685 8263 Password 6DyVca

**Online Hearing Voices Group in Ireland Facilitated by
Michael Ryan**

Hearing Voices Group Ireland

A group for people who hear voices or experience
paranoia and unusual beliefs, on Zoom

Facilitated by Michael Ryan

Every Sunday @ 4pm

Zoom Link <https://us02web.zoom.web/j/89201253186>

Email: vhmichael9345@gmail.com

With enquiries

Families/friends can contact

families@usahearingvoices.org

For support groups

